

18 NORTH AMERICAN STUDENTS TO INTERN WITH CIVIL SOCIETY IN 14 COUNTRIES

AdvocacyNet

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May 24, 2006, Washington DC: The Advocacy Project (AP) has selected eighteen graduate students from North American universities to intern this summer with AP partner organizations around the world.

The interns will help their hosts to work with grass-roots constituents and strengthen their advocacy. AP partners are engaged on issues of great importance, including girls' education in Afghanistan, the rebuilding of democracy in Nepal, the trafficking of women from Africa, the future status of Kosovo, and Palestinian civil society.

"Civil society holds the key to social justice in these countries," said Iain Guest, Director of AP. "This program allows Americans to engage with some very brave people in a constructive, helpful, and unthreatening manner. We are very proud of our interns."

AP's intern program has grown fast since it began in 2003 with 8 students from three universities. This year's recruits were selected from over 140 applicants and are studying at nine universities in the US and Canada.

On Monday, they completed four days of training, aimed at preparing them for assignments and building a sense of shared purpose. While they will be working in very different locations, all of their hosts suffer from a common shortage of resources and organizational constraints which make it hard to put out a consistent message. As a result, AP interns will be helping their hosts to produce newsletters and content for websites, as well as assess their IT needs. As in past years, the interns will also blog directly to the Internet.

As well as helping AP's partners, interns make it possible for AP to work around the world on a small core staff. Three interns will be helping AP to complete projects:

- Yvette Barnes (Georgetown University) is working with the Bosnian organization Bofam to help widows of the Srebrenica massacre build a weaving business.
- Greg Holyfield, (University of Arkansas) will help the Home for Human Rights in Sri Lanka to rebuild Tamil communities that were devastated by the Tsunami.
- Alison Long (American University) will help the Oruj Learning Center (formerly Omid) to promote girl's education within Wardak province, Afghanistan.

Several interns will be working on three ambitious new projects, to be undertaken by AP during the next project cycle (2007-8). These seek to support women's groups in Nigeria,

Europe and the US who are fighting to curb the trafficking of women from Nigeria; to help disadvantaged women in Malaysia work from home; and to strengthen an international campaign by European Roma activists against evictions.

One of AP's goals for this year is to help partners better integrate interns into their work, and this will be a task for some of AP's own interns. Interns are a valuable resource for community-based organizations, but they can also put a strain on overworked staff and leave a gap when they leave. Nicole Cordeau and Stacy Spivey (Georgetown University) will be helping the Jagaran Media Center in Nepal, which works on caste discrimination, to develop a program.

This year's interns will also build links between AP partners abroad and American community groups. Those participating in the US include the Sri Lankan and Nigerian diaspora, a weaving center in Virginia, churches in New York and Boston, and several schools.

The AP interns may also explore the possibility of setting up an informal network among AP's **20** partner organizations, which have much to learn from each other. Several have asked AP to facilitate some sort of exchange.

Past AP interns have found that the **intern** experience can help at school and also in finding work. Pia Schneider, who interned in Bosnia for AP, is now in Indonesia with the International Committee of the Red Cross. Michael Keller (who interned in Sri Lanka) and Christina Fetterhof (Ecuador) have found jobs with the US Peace Corps.

* For intern blogs visit the AP website:
<http://advocacynet.org/fellows/former-peace-fellows/>

The Advocacy Project is based in Washington D.C. Phone +1 202 758 3328. To visit the AP web site for information about our current projects and to make a donation online, please go to: <http://advocacynet.org/>. For questions or comments about the AP and its projects, please email us at dcoffice@advocacynet.org.